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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001637

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NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR CGURNEY
PARIS FOR CNEARY

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ZI](#) [ZANU](#) [PF](#)

SUBJECT: ZANU-PF DISSATISFACTION WITH MUGABE GROWING

Classified By: Political Section Chief Matt Harrington.
Reasons: 1.5 (B) and (D).

Summary

1. (C) Awareness appears to be growing among senior ruling party officials that they have dug Zimbabwe into a very deep hole, and that extricating themselves from it will be next to impossible so long as Robert Mugabe remains at the helm. They agree that an exit package for Mugabe would have to include immunity from prosecution, protection of financial assets, and perhaps a role or position that confers prestige. It is not clear that Mugabe is prepared to leave, although we have heard from one source that he is beginning to consider retirement options, and not clear that those in the party increasingly dissatisfied with his leadership have the capacity or courage to nudge him out. End Summary

Increasing anxiety within ZANU-PF

2. (C) There appears to be a growing realization among some of those in the ruling party's senior ranks that Zimbabwe is in a very deep hole and that Mugabe's departure from the scene is a necessary precondition for the policy changes required for an economic turnaround and a restoration of political stability. According to Eddison Zvobgo, a founding member of ZANU-PF and a former member of both the Cabinet and party Politburo, Vice-President Msika and ZANU-PF Chairman John Nkomo had recently acknowledged to him that Zimbabwe's precipitous economic crisis is inextricably linked with the country's political impasse. Msika and Nkomo reportedly recognized that the only solution is for Mugabe to go. Noting that Mugabe and other GOZ officials have repeatedly stated that the fast track resettlement program will have been concluded by mid-August, Zvobgo held out a remote hope that Mugabe would use this opportunity to declare victory and announce his retirement. At the very least, Zvobgo thought the GOZ could be in for a shock when ZANU-PF MPs representing rural areas return after the legislative break, having seen how badly members of their communities have been affected by the food shortages and general economic decline.

Mugabe goes, but ZANU-PF stays

3. (C) Ghana's well-connected High Commissioner to Zimbabwe, Kwasi Baah-Boakye, relayed to the Ambassador that Ghanaians linked to the First Family (through Mugabe's first wife, Sally) had told him Mugabe is beginning to explore the possibility of stepping down. According to Baah-Boakye, Mugabe is concerned about finding a successor who can effectively protect him and his financial assets. Baah-Boakye's source said Speaker of Parliament and ZANU-PF Secretary for Administration Emmerson Mnangagwa would be

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Mugabe's preferred candidate, and that Mugabe is determined to engineer a succession scenario which preserves the ruling party's hold on power.

4. (C) Politburo member Sikhanyiso Ndlovu confirmed some of this account in a July 12 conversation with political section chief, whom he told that a way must be found for "easing Mugabe out." Ndlovu said the Politburo had not yet taken a position on Mugabe's retirement, although he implied many of his colleagues have been discussing it informally among themselves. Asked whether Mugabe was aware of such discussions, Ndlovu said he thought not. He agreed that any exit package would have to immunize the President from prosecution for past misdeeds and safeguard his financial resources. Ndlovu speculated that, perhaps, creation of a well-endowed educational foundation with Mugabe at its head might be a sufficiently attractive lure into retirement. Such a foundation could preserve Mugabe's prestige by providing a healthy income and allowing him to travel widely, while working on an issue he cares about. Ndlovu had not yet discussed this idea with anyone else, but he thought it

important that he and other ruling party insiders be prepared to offer Mugabe an appealing alternative to the Presidency, when the appropriate moment arises.

War Veterans Becoming Expendable?

15. (C) Meanwhile, tensions appear to be rising between the Government and its shock troops for the last two years -- members of the National Liberation War Veterans Association (NLWVA). War veteran leaders have criticized the takeover of a number of commercial farms -- occupied by war veterans for up to two years under the fast track resettlement program -- by senior ZANU-PF politicians, and have expressed displeasure with increasingly paltry pensions, and health and education benefits. In addition, some appear concerned at recent moves to reduce the influence of key war veterans within ruling party structures. The NLWVA's national secretary for security, Mike Moyo, released a ferocious letter on July 12 calling ZANU-PF political commissar Elliot Manyika "a confirmed coward," questioning his liberation war credentials, and accusing him of trying to purge the ruling party of war veterans.

16. (C) Although growing dissatisfaction among members of this group appears to constitute a potentially significant source of pressure on the Mugabe regime, a prominent liberation war fighter who now leads an organization of war veterans determined to play a positive role in building democratic institutions dismissed the NLWVA's capacity to create trouble for the Government. Wilfred Mhanda of the Zimbabwe Liberators Platform told us that the war veterans who have served on the front lines of the GOZ's campaign of intimidation during the past two years have now outlived their usefulness and are being cut loose. Since their numbers are relatively few, they can be easily controlled by GOZ security forces. Mhanda noted the July 9 conviction of NLWVA secretary for projects Andrew Ndlovu on corruption charges dating back to 1998, and he predicted that the GOZ would now allow long-standing criminal cases against other senior war veterans to proceed.

Impact of Targeted Sanctions

17. (C) At the conclusion of his conversation with political section chief, Sikhanyiso Ndlovu produced a letter he had recently received from AF Assistant Secretary Kansteiner banning his travel to the United States. He expressed serious concern that he had been included on our targeted sanctions list, insisting that he had been a voice of moderation in the party, had been open with us about some key developments in the party, and had three U.S. citizen children living in the United States. He said that he would henceforth be inaccessible to us and would remain so as long as his name remained on the list.

Comment

18. (C) The depth of Zimbabwe's economic and political crises is finally beginning to sink in with even some of the harder line elements of ZANU-PF, as is the realization that major policy reversals are necessary to put things back on track, policy reversals that are unlikely so long as President Mugabe remains at the helm. Among insiders, there is a growing perception of Mugabe as a serious liability, but it is not at all clear whether anyone has the capacity or gumption to push him out. If Mugabe is beginning to explore retirement options, as Baah-Boakye's sources suggest, we have no doubt that he will require an exit package containing the elements described in paras 3 and 4, and will try to foist on the party a successor of his choosing. On the latter point, Mugabe is constrained by the constitution, which requires the holding of an election within 90 days of an incumbent president leaving office.

SULLIVAN